



Census

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[Home](#) > [Media centre](#) > [Media releases](#) > 2021 Census: 2.5 million people working from home on Census day

2021 Census: 2.5 million people working from home on Census day

Media Release

Released 12/10/2022

i **Source:** [Snapshot of Australia, 2021](#)
[Income and work: Census, 2021](#)

The 2021 Census was conducted at an unusual time with much of Australia's eastern seaboard subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics today launched 2021 Census data showing that of the 12 million people employed on Census day (10 August 2021), more than 20 per cent (2.5 million) worked from home.

People in eastern seaboard states were more likely to work from home than in the rest of the country, with 31 per cent (1.1 million people) of those employed working from home in New South Wales and 26 per cent (814,000 people) in Victoria. In the Northern Territory, 4 per cent (4,545 people) worked from home.

Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician said, "The 2021 Census data released today provides fascinating insights into the working life of Australians during the pandemic".

Across Australia, people employed in Internet Publishing and Broadcasting had the highest proportion of people working from home (72 per cent). In contrast, less than 5 per cent of people employed in hospitals reported working from home.

The Census revealed differences in working from home between capital cities and the rest of the state. One in four employed people living in capital cities reported working from

home compared with one in eight outside capital cities.

COVID-19 is also associated with changes in occupations for people in Australia. 2021 Census data showed the number of people employed as Tourism and Travel Advisers more than halved since the last Census, while Delivery Drivers increased by more than 70 per cent.

Pandemic restrictions impacted hours worked for some people. The Census showed that almost 7 per cent (787,000) of employed people worked zero hours in the week before Census, compared to 3 per cent in the week before the 2016 Census. People working zero hours are not working for reasons such as taking leave or are unable to work due to lockdown or self-isolation.

Dr David Gruen said, "COVID-19 restrictions in New South Wales contributed to unprecedented results. For example, 15 per cent of people employed in the Construction industry in New South Wales worked zero hours. This contrasts to the rest of Australia, with 3 per cent of the people employed in Construction working zero hours".

A high proportion of people employed in the Arts and Recreation Services industry worked zero hours in states impacted by restrictions. In this industry, 23 per cent of employed persons worked zero hours in New South Wales, 20 per cent in Queensland and 14 per cent in Victoria, compared to 5 per cent in the rest of Australia.

"The 2021 Census will provide enduring value to researchers and policy makers by revealing how the COVID-19 pandemic changed life in Australia," Dr Gruen added.

Table 1: Total Employed by State and Territory; total worked from home and total away from work in 2021

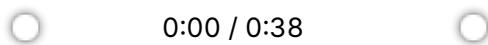
State/ Territory	Total employed	Total worked from home	Worked zero hours / away from work
New South Wales	3,684,158	1,141,467	331,611
Victoria	3,162,893	814,082	160,594
Queensland	2,444,090	344,696	171,840
South Australia	839,414	80,513	36,281
Western Australia	1,306,249	98,289	58,597
Tasmania	254,722	20,330	12,007
Northern Territory	107,035	4,545	5,323
Australian Capital Territory	248,603	27,211	11,003
Other Territories	2,251	122	131
Australia	12,049,410	2,531,262	787,382

Table 2: Proportion worked zero hours by industry in 2021

Industry	Zero hours
Accommodation and Food Services	12.8%
Administrative and Support Services	7.1%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3.3%
Arts and Recreation Services	15.3%
Construction	6.7%
Education and Training	5.9%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	4.3%
Financial and Insurance Services	3.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	6.3%
Information Media and Telecommunications	5.1%
Manufacturing	4.0%
Mining	9.0%
Other Services	10.1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3.2%
Public Administration and Safety	6.2%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	4.4%
Retail Trade	8.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	6.4%
Wholesale Trade	3.8%
Total	6.5%

Downloadable audio quotes

COVID-19 impacts - Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician



[Download mp3 \[914.91 KB\]](#)

Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician, discusses COVID-19 impacts on the way Australians were working on Census day 2021.

[Transcript +](#)

Media notes

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- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Media Team via media@abs.gov.au (<mailto:media@abs.gov.au>) (8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri).
- Search for 2021 Census data through the [QuickStats tool](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>)..

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